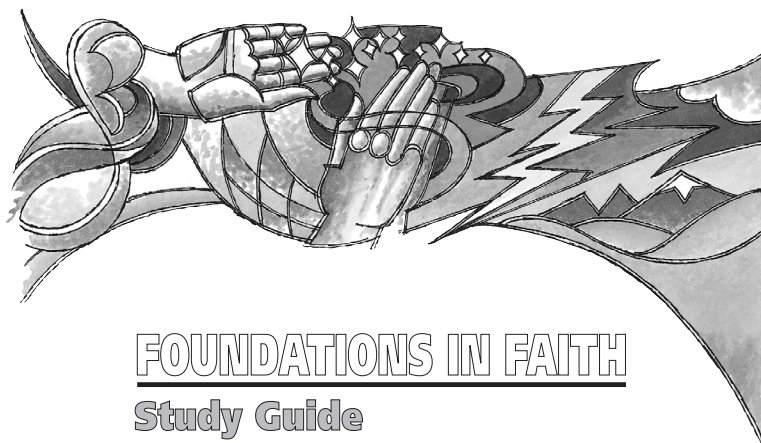


THE LORD'S PRAYER



FOUNDATIONS IN FAITH

Study Guide



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Edited by Thomas Doyle

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INTRODUCTION

The Foundations in Faith series is an introduction to the truths of God's Word as presented in Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism.

Why study the Catechism?

In the early Christian church, God's people confessed their faith and witnessed to the world in brief creeds. "Jesus is Lord" (1 Corinthians 12:3). "The mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels ..." (1 Timothy 3:16). These passages from New Testament, along with others, gave believers short, concise statements of faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. In time, the church wrote and adopted new creeds to explain more fully the basics of the Christian faith.

The church also wrote and adopted catechisms as summaries of the major doctrines of Holy Scripture. At first, catechisms were tools for teachers. With the invention of the printing press, catechisms were printed for pastors, teachers of the faith, and parents to use within the congregation and at home.

Luther's Small Catechism, published in 1529, covers the "Six Chief Parts" of Christian doctrine. In Luther's words, "The Catechism is an epitome and brief transcript of the entire Holy Scripture." It is a summary and guide for believers, as they learn and reflect on the truths of God's Word.

The Foundations in Faith series explores Luther's Small Catechism in four parts: The Ten Commandments, The Apostles' Creed, The Lord's Prayer, and The Sacraments. The study guides may be used in any order (although the sequence in the Catechism is preferred), and are designed as an *introduction* or *refresher* course for congregational or personal use. Ideally, participants will learn how the Catechism presents God's Word in a clear, understandable way, in order to bring God's people to faith in Christ and to a daily life shaped and empowered by Word and Sacrament.

May God bless your study of His Word in the Catechism!

THE 1 MYSTERY OF PRAYER

Pray Together

My God and my love,
You are mine, and I am Yours.
Deepen Your love in me, O Lord,
that I may learn how joyful it is to serve You.
Let Your love take hold of me
that I may be filled with devotion
because of Your goodness.
Then I will sing to You the song of love.
I will follow You,
and my soul will never grow tired of praising You.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Discover

God commands and invites His people to pray. For believers, prayer is a heart to heart conversation with the heavenly Father, who shows His love in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ.

Introduction

It's a simple truth: God wants His people to pray. He promises to hear and answer our prayers.

For many people, though, prayer is not simple. They ask, "What should I pray? How should I pray?" They think of prayer as a mystery.

When detectives solve mysteries, they ask fundamental questions: Who? What? When? Where? How? As we study God's Word and the Catechism, we will, as Luther notes, "value prayer as a great and precious" gift.

- What questions do you have about prayer?

- How has prayer been a part of your life in the past?

- In what ways do you want to deepen your prayer life?

Who?

God alone is God. The God revealed in the Bible is the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Only prayers addressed to the triune God are acceptable to God.

God's Word

Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.

So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: "O King Darius, live forever! The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the

THE INTRODUCTION AND THE FIRST PETITION

2

Pray Together

Lord, You know what is best for me.
Give me what You will and when You will
and as much as You will.
Do with me as You know best and as it pleases You
and brings You the most honor.
Place me where You will
and guide me according to Your wisdom.
I am in Your hand as Your servant
ready to do all that You command.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Discover

In the Lord's Prayer, God invites us to call on Him as our loving, gracious Father through Christ. Forgiven in Jesus, we grow in knowledge of His Word and live to His glory.

Introduction

A Christian poet once wrote, "The Lord's Prayer may be committed to memory quickly, but it is slowly learned by heart."

- What did the poet mean?

- When did you first hear and memorize the Lord's Prayer?

- In what ways have you "learned" the Lord's Prayer throughout your life?

The Catechism

THE INTRODUCTION

Our Father who art in heaven.

What does this mean? With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.

In faith, we pray "Our Father."

Martin Luther said in his devotional writings on the Lord's Prayer, "The best way to begin or introduce the prayer is to know how to address, honor, and treat the person ... how to conduct ourselves in his presence, so that he will be gracious toward us and willing to listen to us. Of all names there is none that gains us more favor with God than that of 'Father.' "

1. What images come to mind when you call God Father?
2. In general, what privileges do children enjoy from a loving father?
3. Describe how God's children may call on Him with "all boldness and confidence."

God's Word

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no

longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’ So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

“But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

“Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

“The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

“ ‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ ” (Luke 15: 11–32)

4. What characteristics do you admire in the father in the parable?

5. What characteristics do the sons demonstrate by their words and actions?

6. How does the father in the parable remind you of the heavenly Father?

God Our Father

God is *our* Father. In the Introduction, we pray that God will be recognized by everyone in the world as the perfect Father: be almighty, all-powerful, all-knowing, always present for His children.

- Why did Jesus begin His prayer with our Father rather than my Father?

- What comfort do you have in knowing that you pray together with all believers, “Our Father”?

Who Art in Heaven

The phrase “who art in heaven” reminds us that God is Lord of all. God’s power is not restricted to heaven or earth. His power is immeasurable.

God’s Word

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives all men life and breath and

everything else. From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. 'For in Him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are His offspring.'

"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill." (Acts 17:24–29)

7. How does St. Paul describe God in this speech at Mars Hill?

8. In what way is God's power intimidating to people? In what way is God's power reassuring to you?

9. The perfect relationship between the Creator and His creation was broken by the sin of Adam and Eve. But God had a plan.

a. What was God's plan to bring us back to His family?

b. How did God accomplish His plan?

10. Not only did God restore our broken relationship with Him: He made us dear children. The apostle Paul writes, "For you did not receive a spirit that makes

you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15). What blessings have you received as a child of God through faith in Jesus?

We have the privilege of approaching God in prayer because of our faith in Christ. We are forgiven, and as forgiven children of God we can pray to Him as “our Father.”

At times, however, we may not feel forgiven. We may not feel like praying. Our hearts are overwhelmed with the demands of the day. Our minds cannot fathom all the responsibilities we face at home or work. We do not know what to pray.

Good news! God has provided for our needs!

God’s Word

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified.

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is He that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than

that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. (Romans 8:26–34)

11. Who prays and pleads for us?

12. The Spirit “helps us in our weakness.” What types of weakness do God’s people face? When might our weakness discourage us from praying?

13. When the words will not come, what comfort does God’s promise offer us?

The Catechism

THE FIRST PETITION

Hallowed be Thy name.

What does this mean? God’s name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also.

How is God’s name kept holy? God’s name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to God’s Word profanes the name of God among us. Protect us from this, heavenly Father!

To hallow God's name means to keep it holy. The name by which God revealed Himself to Moses was I AM WHO I AM, or Yahweh, which means "He is" (see Exodus 3:14–15). In Old Testament times, God's name was considered so sacred that people would not speak it or write it for fear of inadvertently misusing it. In most modern Bible translations, Yahweh is not used, but is instead translated as LORD.

God's name describes who He is and what He does. Throughout the Bible, God is described by His actions and attributes: Eternal God (Genesis 21:33); God Almighty (Genesis 17:1); Lord (Genesis 18:27); Yahweh (Exodus 3:14); Yahweh Almighty (1 Samuel 1:3); the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 3:15); Creator (Deuteronomy 32:6).

14. How has God impacted your life? What names would you use to describe His power and love?

15. How does worship and Bible study strengthen you as you trust and live for Christ?

God's People Pray

Heavenly Father, God of all grace,
awaken our hearts to Your Word.
We thank You for Your mercy.
We praise You for Your goodness.
Send us Your Holy Spirit,
that we hear and believe the Good News
of our salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord.
In His name, I pray. Amen.

A Verse a Day

Sunday: How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. (1 John 3:1)

Monday: Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

Tuesday: As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. (Psalm 103:13)

Wednesday: You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26)

Thursday: Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. (Psalm 124:8)

Friday: "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name. (Exodus 20:7)

Saturday: Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name. (Psalm 103:1)

3

THE SECOND AND THIRD PETITIONS

too. As we are connected to His Word, baptized into the saving name of God, and nourished in the Lord's Supper, we grow in faith and service.

Introduction

- Encourage participants to reflect on the word kingdom in our day and location.
- Answers will vary.

The Catechism

1. Allow participants to share evidence of God's rule over the universe and human history. Examples may include the consistency and order in the universe, the beauty of creation, and His ongoing protection of humankind.
2. The Lord Jesus rules His church in love, and through His Gospel He calls people to faith, equips and strengthens them for service, and grows His kingdom. Encourage participants to reflect on Christ's rule in their lives and in His church.
3. Accept participant responses. Blessings may include no sickness, pain, hunger, or thirst, a glorified body, reunion with loved ones.

God's Word

4. Sin destroyed the "good and perfect" world God had created for human beings.

5. The serpent was, in fact, the devil. Satan brought sin into the world by tempting Adam and Eve, who yielded of their own free will. Satan, the “old, evil foe,” continues to tempt all people today and to work against God’s kingdom and purpose in the Gospel.
6. God brought His kingdom of grace into the world through Christ. St. Paul writes, “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13–14).

The Kingdom of Grace

- The heavenly Father brought us into the kingdom of grace through Baptism, through His Word when we heard and believed the Gospel.
- Allow participants to share their comfort and encouragement as Christ leads them through His Word.

The Catechism

7. Allow participants to share examples of God’s activity in our world.
8. Answers will vary. They may include assaults from the world beyond our human ability, pride, substituting our plans and goals for God’s purposes, etc.
9. Because Christ is at the heart and center of the Father’s plan, we rest content in knowing that what God wills in Christ is our heart’s desire.

The Heavenly Father’s Will

- Allow participants to share their joy in knowing God wants the best for His people.

God's Word

10. The seed represents the Word of God, the Good News of the Kingdom, at work in different soils, that is, human lives.
11. The soils represent the different attitudes toward God's Word. Some people hear and do not understand; they refuse to believe, or perhaps have no interest in the coming of the Kingdom. In both cases, Satan quickly "snatches away" the good seed. Some people hear and receive the Good News of the kingdom for "a short time." The joy of salvation, however, quickly dissolves, as the fire of "trouble and persecution" burns up the seeds of trust and personal devotion. Still others hear the message, understand, and believe the Good News, but they soon are overwhelmed by the concerns and snares of everyday life. But in the mystery of God, some hear, understand, believe, and bring forth a crop, a rich harvest of the Spirit's fruit.
12. The parable serves to illustrate God's gracious work among His people through His Gospel. In Christ, God desires the salvation of every person: He wants His kingdom to come and His will to be done in every life. Yet not everyone will hear and believe the Good News.